CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1.   A method for document processing, the method comprising:

     a)   receiving availability profiles from a plurality of personnel operating a plurality of remote computers;

     b)   receiving a work order from a remote customer's computer, said work order having a time frame within which said work order may be serviced;

     where any of said availability profiles indicates that any of said personnel are available to service said work order within said time frame:

     c)   receiving within the context of said work order an image of a document from said remote customer's computer;

     d)   decomposing said image into a plurality of data entry region sub-images;

     e)   providing any of said plurality of data entry region sub-images to said available personnel at said remote computers; and

     f)   receiving from each of said plurality of remote computers a data entry value associated with at least one of said data entry region sub-images.

2.   A method according to claim 1 wherein any of said steps are performed at a central computer that is in communication with any of said remote computers.

3.   A method according to claim 1 wherein said providing step e) comprises transmitting each of said data entry region sub-images together with a unique identifier.

4.   A method according to claim 1 and further comprising collating said data entry values into a character-based electronic document corresponding to said image.

5.   A method according to claim 4 and further comprising providing said electronic document to said remote customer.

6.   A method according to claim 1 and further comprising performing optical character recognition on any of said data entry region sub-images, and wherein said providing step e) comprises providing if a score related to a result of said performing optical character recognition is below a predefined threshold.

7.   A method according to claim 1 and further comprising:

performing optical character recognition on any of said data entry region sub-images, thereby resulting in an optical character recognition value;

comparing said data entry value associated with said data entry region sub-image to said optical character recognition value;

where said data entry value and said optical character recognition value differ, providing said data entry region sub-image to another one of said available personnel to which said data entry region sub-image was not previously provided.

8.   A method according to claim 4 wherein said providing step e) comprises:

providing at least one of said plurality of data entry region sub-images to at least two of said available personnel; and

where a predetermined number of said data entry values associated with said data entry region sub-images are the same, wherein said collating step comprises collating one of said predetermined number of said data entry values.

9.   A method according to claim 4 and further comprising:

providing in said providing step e) at least one of said plurality of data entry region sub-images to a plurality of said available personnel;

performing optical character recognition on said data entry region sub-image, thereby resulting in an optical character recognition value;

comparing a plurality of said data entry values associated with said data entry region sub-image and said optical character recognition value; and

collating in said collating step one of said values from among a predetermined number of said values that are the same.

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10.   A method according to claim 1 and further comprising:

receiving from any of said plurality of remote computers an indicator associated with at least one of said data entry region sub-images rejecting said associated data entry region sub-image; and

providing to said rejecting remote computer an expanded data entry region sub-image that includes said rejected data entry region sub-image.

11.   A method according to claim 1 and further comprising:

rating the performance of any of said data entry clerks;

selecting any of said data entry clerks to service said work order whose performance rating equals or exceeds a performance rating specified for said work order.

12.   A method according to claim 1 and further comprising:

selecting any of said data entry clerks to service said work order who have been pre-approved by said customer.

13.   A system for document processing, the system comprising:

a plurality of availability profiles for a plurality of personnel operating a plurality of remote computers;

a work order received from a remote customer's computer, said work order having a time frame within which said work order may be serviced;

means for determining whether any of said availability profiles indicates that any of said personnel are available to service said work order within said time frame;

means for receiving within the context of said work order an image of a document from said remote customer's computer;

means for decomposing said image into a plurality of data entry region sub-images;

means for providing any of said plurality of data entry region sub-images to said available personnel at said remote computers; and

means for receiving from each of said plurality of remote computers a data entry value associated with at least one of said data entry region sub-images.

14.   A system according to claim 13 and further comprising a central computer that is in communication with any of said remote computers and that is configured with any of the elements of claim 13.

15.   A system according to claim 13 wherein said means for providing is operative to transmit each of said data entry region sub-images together with a unique identifier.

16.   A system according to claim 13 and further comprising means for collating said data entry values into a character-based electronic document corresponding to said image.

17.   A system according to claim 16 and further comprising means for providing said electronic document to said remote customer.

18.   A system according to claim 13 and further comprising means for performing optical character recognition on any of said data entry region sub-images, and wherein said means for providing is operative to provide if a score related to a result of said performing optical character recognition is below a predefined threshold.

19.   A system according to claim 13 and further comprising:

means for performing optical character recognition on any of said data entry region sub-images and being operative to provide an optical character recognition value;

means for comparing said data entry value associated with said data entry region sub-image to said optical character recognition value; and

means for providing said data entry region sub-image to another one of said available personnel to which said data entry region sub-image was not previously provided, operative where said data entry value and said optical character recognition value differ.

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20.   A system according to claim 16 wherein said means for providing is operative to provide at least one of said plurality of data entry region sub-images to at least two of said available personnel, and, where a predetermined number of said data entry values associated with said data entry region sub-images are the same, wherein said means for collating is operative to collate one of said predetermined number of said data entry values.

21.   A system according to claim 16 wherein said means for providing is operative to provide at least one of said plurality of data entry region sub-images to a plurality of said available personnel, and further comprising:

    means for performing optical character recognition on said data entry region sub-image, operative to provide an optical character recognition value; and

    means for comparing a plurality of said data entry values associated with said data entry region sub-image and said optical character recognition value,

    and wherein said means for collating is operative to collate one of said values from among a predetermined number of said values that are the same.

22.   A system according to claim 13 and further comprising:

    means for receiving from any of said plurality of remote computers an indicator associated with at least one of said data entry region sub-images rejecting said associated data entry region sub-image; and

    means for providing to said rejecting remote computer an expanded data entry region sub-image that includes said rejected data entry region sub-image.

23.   A system according to claim 13 and further comprising:

    a performance rating of any of said data entry clerks; and

    means for selecting any of said data entry clerks to service said work order whose performance rating equals or exceeds a performance rating specified for said work order.

24.   A system according to claim 13 and further comprising:

means for selecting any of said data entry clerks to service said work order who have been pre-approved by said customer.